

(Washington, DC)- "Today we honor the life of a woman whose brave and simple act on a Montgomery, Alabama bus sparked a boycott, fueled a movement, and signaled the beginning of the end of the shameful practice of segregation. Rosa Parks' role in the civil rights movement serves as a fundamental inspiration for Americans to make the connection between their own personal struggles and the overall problems within their community.

"Nearly 50 years ago, Parks mustered the energy to confront the conditions under which she was living. Motivated by the frustration of a personal situation, she stepped out of her story long enough to recognize and address collective wrongs against an entire race. Over a decade before the women's movement would encourage women to do the same, Parks truly understood that the personal is political.

"Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the other leaders of the 380-day Montgomery bus boycott knew that its success rested on two things: courage and organization. These are the same tools we must employ in continuing today's struggle for equal opportunity across the country.

"Everyday millions of Americans encounter barriers in their attempt to put food on the table, deal with medical emergencies without health insurance, help their kids get a good education-all while working two or three jobs. For so many of them, Rosa Parks is their inspiration to overcome these barriers, and she is also mine."

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